



Flight Jacket

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Marine Corps Air Station Miramar

December 19, 2003

Caught!

*Saddam Hussein
taken into custody -
Marine forces to
continue efforts in Iraq*

Story compiled by Sgt. A.C. Strong

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

December 13, 2003, while America slept, United States military forces captured Saddam Hussein alive. Caught in a swift raid, conducted without casualties, the so-called "Baghdad Butcher" will now face the justice he denied to millions, according to United States Central Command.

"This was clearly a huge day for the Coalition and for the Iraqi people as well," said Capt. Michael J. Friel, Combined Joint Task Force 7 spokesperson. "Iraqi journalists were beside themselves as they reacted to the news. Some cried. Many stood and cheered at the news the dictator was found."

With newspapers around the world giving credit to everyone from his physician, to his second of four wives, Samira Shahbandar, rumors abound as to what actually occurred.

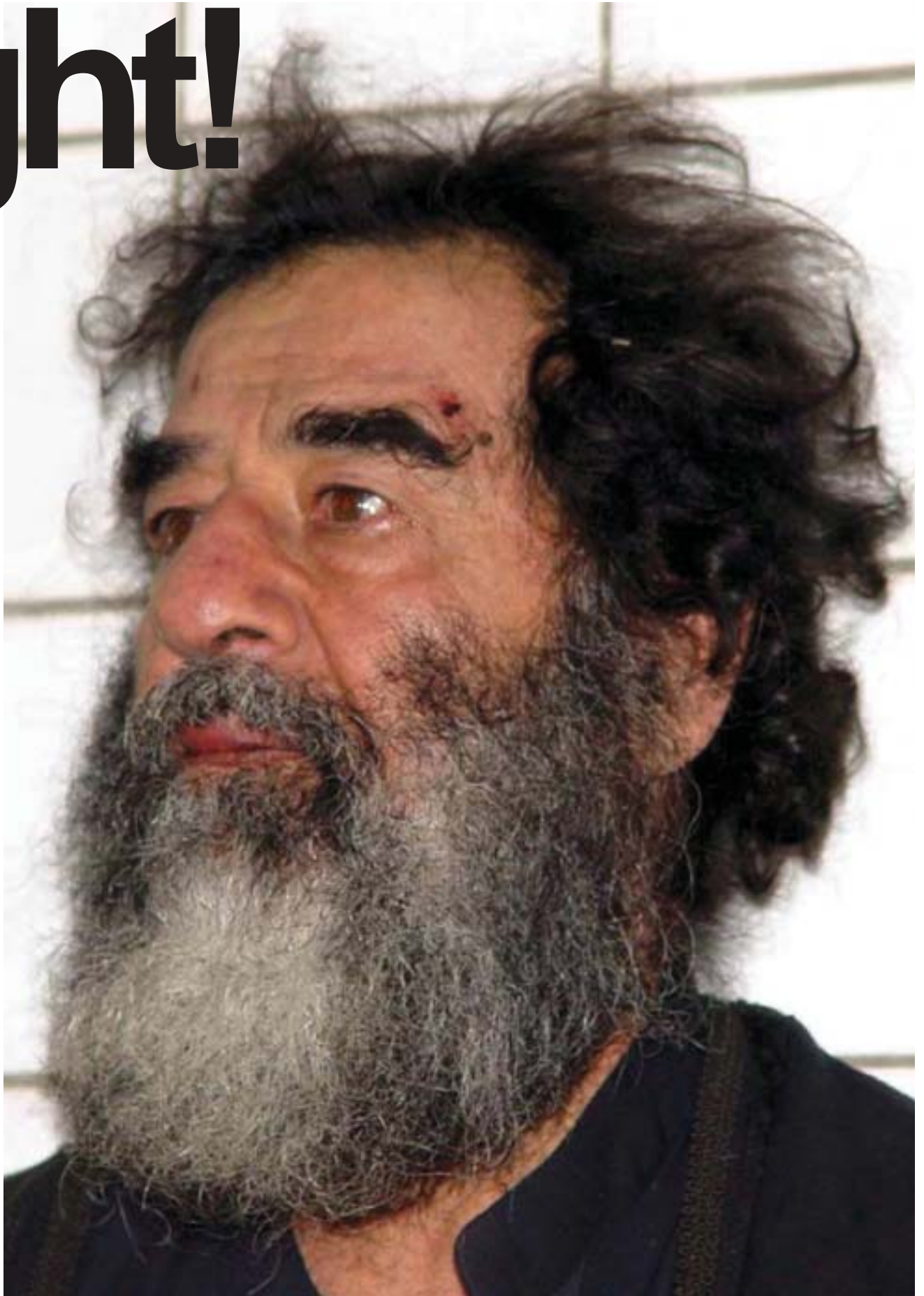
However, according to Maj. Gen. James Mattis, 1st Marine Division commander, the most recent intelligence leading to successful ground operations came directly from Iraqi citizens.

According to U.S. Central Command, at approximately 8:30 p.m., in Iraq, a joint operation led by Coalition forces was conducted in the town of Ad Dwar, 15 kilometers south of Tikrit.

"No shots were fired during the operation," said Friel. "There were no injuries to Iraqi or Coalition forces."

Taking approximately three hours, the operation was comprised of 600 integrated Coalition special operations forces and the 4th Infantry Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team. There were no Iraqi security forces involved in the raid. However, it was an Iraqi who provided the Coalition critical information leading to the capture.

Hussein was identified by multiple former regime officers and through DNA samples. He is currently in good health



Saddam Hussein is photographed for historical documentation. Hussein was captured by U.S. forces near his hometown of Tikrit, north of Baghdad, Saturday. Department of Defense photo courtesy of The New York Times

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Inside

Weekend forecast from Miramar's weather station



66° / 52°
Today



67° / 51°
Saturday



64° / 55°
Sunday

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flies over
Las Vegas**



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**Erney
donates
time for Toys
for Tots**



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Miramar Mail



"Sometimes the do-it-yourself car wash hoses are damaged or missing. Is there other car wash gear that is available?"

Cpl. Fernando Figueroa, maintenance administration clerk, VMFA(AW)-121

The missing and broken water hoses at the free car wash are due to theft and vandalism. Marine Corps Community Services continues to replace hoses and nozzles as feasible and has replaced over 50 this year. The majority of the hoses are taken over the weekend. Since this is an

unsupervised free program it is difficult to control.

A number of methods have been tried to combat the problem with little or no success. MCCS is open to cost effective solutions to solve this ongoing problem. Hoses could be issued from the gyms but this would be an inconvenience to our customers. We look forward to receiving suggestions and request your support in watching for potential vandals or thieves. Please contact Bob Stopp at 577-4127 with your recommendations.



Maj. Gen. Jon A. Gallinetti

Editor's note:
E-mail your questions to the Commanding General, Marine Corps Air Station Miramar at:
ombpaoflight@miramar.usmc.mil

Holiday wishes from the Commandant

Gen. M.W. Hagee

Commandant of the Marine Corps

Happy Holidays!

Silke and I wish to extend the season's greetings to the entire Marine family and to wish all of you the best in the New Year.

The true spirit of the holiday season is expressed in the words "Peace on earth and good will toward men." In the past year our Corps sacrificed much toward obtaining that ideal but there is much more to be done. The coming year is sure to offer all of us new challenges and fresh demands. No one understands this better or will feel it more sharply than the Marine family.

Because of this, we should all make the extra effort to ensure that we celebrate our holidays with those we love in a manner that strengthens our most important personal relationships. For those Marines deployed or separated from loved ones during this holiday season, know that you are in your family's thoughts and prayers and that the American people respect and honor your service.

Just as the holidays are a time for joyous celebration, they are a time for extra caution. During last year's holiday season five Marines were killed in off-duty mishaps. The loss of even one member of the Marine family is a tragedy, but when an accident or mishap is due to poor risk management it is simply unacceptable.

Motor vehicle mishaps continue to be the leading killer of Marines. Use your seatbelt, and make sure all passengers buckle up. Make sure that children are in an approved and properly installed safety seat. Always

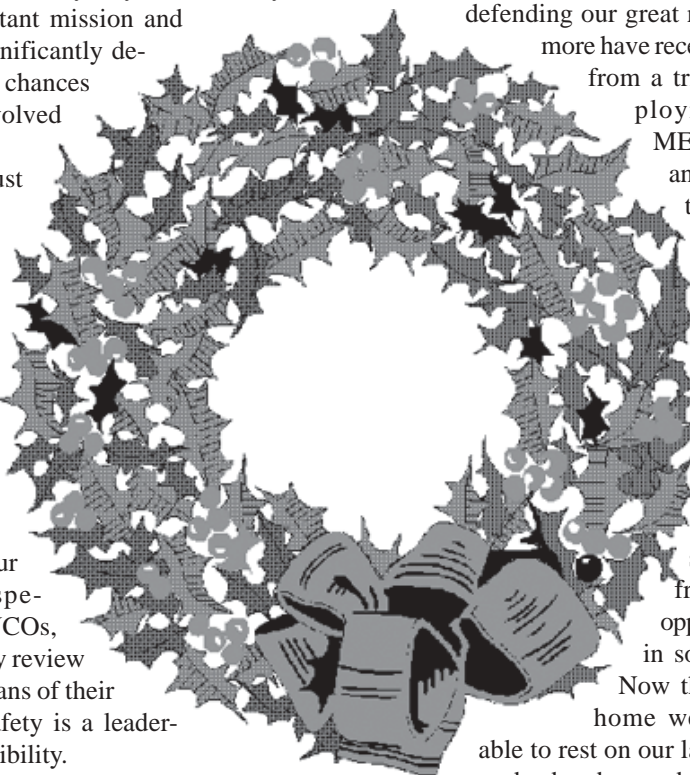
remember there is never an excuse for drinking and driving and if you are planning to drive long distances, be sure to examine the risks. Sometimes an alternate form of transportation is a better option especially during the winter season when roads are often icy, dark and crowded.

Plan your liberty as you would any other important mission and you will significantly decrease your chances of being involved in a mishap.

Lastly, just as Marine leaders would never send Marines in harms way without setting them up for success, I charge the leaders of our Corps, especially our NCOs, to personally review the travel plans of their Marines. Safety is a leadership responsibility.

Silke and I share a Christmas wish that each member of the Marine family returns from their holiday travels healthy, refreshed and ready for whatever our nation requires of us. Happy holidays and may you all enjoy the blessings of the season.

Semper Fidelis and keep attacking!



A message from IMEF Commanding General

Lt. Gen. James T. Conway

IMEF Commanding General

Greetings to all the magnificent Marines, Sailors, and families of the MEF. As we enter the traditional holiday season our military family has much to be thankful for. Though some of our units are forward deployed on Okinawa, and on the high seas

defending our great nation, many more have recently returned

from a triumphant deployment. The

MEF was swift and decisive in the elimination of a brutal Iraqi dictator and his regime.

Then, for well over five months, we brought stabilization, security and freedom to an oppressed region in southern Iraq.

Now that most are home we should be able to rest on our laurels; honor our dead and wounded; and spend time with our families. We should be able to drink beer with our friends and pass on war stories that get bigger and more dangerous with each telling, forget about Iraq and focus on football, and just reflect on where we've been and what we've done. Our steps

should be jaunty and our hearts light – but for one inescapable fact:

The nation is still at war.

Since September two years ago, our Nation has been engaged in a Global War on Terrorism. The MEF's routine of predictable six-month deployments, followed by 18-months at home, has vanished. Is it gone forever? I don't think so. What I can say for certain is that the performance of Marines and Sailors in Afghanistan, and in Iraq during the fighting and the humanitarian operations has been eye-watering. As a result, our service is much in demand by the national leadership. The good news is: Everybody loves Marines. The bad news is: Everybody loves Marines; and now another deployment looms large in our future. Our Commandant, Gen. Hagee, has been asked to examine how we can put the maximum number of Marines back on deck in Iraq. While planners here, at our higher headquarters in Hawaii, and at Central Command headquarters in Tampa concern themselves with how to do that – we are all concerned about the impact on you.

Unlike the Army's 12-month program for deployed units, the CMC has announced that the Marine deployments will not normally be longer than seven months. This maintains a level of normalcy and is in keeping with our service culture. It will require the rotation of more units to get the job done, but we'll accept that as a byproduct of the shorter deployment. The commandant has done several other things in order to mitigate the impact of the greater demand for Marines. First, he has made available East Coast forces from

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Flight Jacket

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Maj. Gen. Jon A. Gallinetti

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Greyhawks reach 40,000 mishap-free flight hours

Story by Lance Cpl. John Sayas

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

While preparing for a possible redeployment in support of the war in Iraq, Marines of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 161, Greyhawks, made their mark in squadron history by surpassing the 40,000 mishap-free flight hours mark recently during a training exercise in Indiana Springs, Nev.

The squadron began their climb into the history books in August 1995. Since then, the Marines have been involved in numerous exercises and operations in the Western Pacific and Operation Iraqi Freedom. During the war, the Marines were involved in a variety of supporting missions while attached to the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) including the destruction of 45 enemy targets. These targets con-

sisted of artillery, tanks, armored vehicles, aircraft and buildings.

“Going ten years is relatively significant in hitting 40,000 hours between being embarked on ships and going into random countries supporting various operations,” said Capt. Jason E. Donovan, flight officer and Easton, N.H., native.

HMM-161 consists mainly of CH-46E Sea Knights, but when reinforced, it is capable of conducting a full range of Marine air operations, comprising of CH-53E Super Stallion, UH-1N Huey and AH-1W Super Cobra helicopters, and AV-8B Harriers. None of the aircraft have been involved in any class “A” mishaps, meaning there was no loss of aircraft, no loss of life or damage sustained in excess of \$1 million.

Donovan said the effort by all the enlisted Marines to keep the aircraft maintained and officers fly-



Two CH-46s with HMM-161 fly over the Hoover Dam during the flight that surpassed 40,000 mishap-free flight hours during a training exercise in Indiana Springs, Nev. Photo courtesy of Maj. K. J. Spackman

ing safely is what allowed the milestone to be accomplished.

“It is not just a testament to the people flying the aircraft, flying them safely and accomplishing what they are set out to do, but also a testament to the young Marines working on the aircraft and keep-

ing them flying for 40,000 hours and not losing any missions,” said Donovan.

Capt. C. L. Janeczek, aviation safety officer, said it is a hard milestone to hit because of the kind of flying the squadron does on a regular basis. He said the work they do

is dangerous and involves many different environmental and human factors that can easily cause a mishap to occur.

“It says a lot about how the guys work in shop and how the pilots are trained,” said the El Paso, Texas native.

Flying Tigers return home in time for holidays

HMH-361 Marines return from UDP, many start Christmas leave

Story by Cpl. James S. McGregor

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

The 200-plus Marines of Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 361 returned to Miramar from a five-month unit deployment program Saturday.

The tour that started in Okinawa, Japan in June, when the advanced party arrived at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, also took Marines to exercises in Korea and the Philippines. Others supported the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable).

According to 1st Lt. Lyle L. Gordon, S-5 and S-6 officer, HMH-361, the advanced party arrived in June and the main body was on the island by July. Four CH-53Es were sent to support the 31st MEU (SOC), and the rest of the squadron prepared for their first major deployment.

The squadron spent part of August and September in Korea during Exercise Millennium Edge, where they supported Exercise Ulchi Focus Lens. During the exercise, Marines supported and trained with Republic of Korea Marines as well as Army aviation units, Gordon said.

In October the tigers deployed to the Philippines where they took part in Exercise Talon Vision, a combined exercise during which HMH-361 performed training evolutions to include gunshots, aerial refueling, inserts and night flying.

Between deployments, the tigers conducted training in picking up external loads and formation flying, Gordon continued.

“A lot of the UDP was training and get-

ting pilots comfortable,” Gordon explained. “We spent a lot of time getting new people spun up because we had a lot of new guys come to the squadron right before we left for the UDP.”

Gordon added that aside from getting new Marines settled in, the main obstacle was maintaining aircraft.

“We had 12 aircraft to start with and by the end of the UDP we had 10 up and running. We were able to support the mission, which is a big accomplishment because when we got there we didn’t have many birds ready to go, and some needed maintenance,” Gordon said. “The maintenance department could have been show-stoppers, but they kept things going and made it possible for every-

one to accomplish the mission.”

According to Gunnery Sgt. Bret L. Painter, quality assurance representative, HMH-361, another difficulty during the deployment was an accelerated schedule.

“It was a five-month UDP, which is usually six months, and the op tempo is always high, but we had less time to do everything that needed to be done,” Painter explained. “During the first two to three weeks things were slowed down a little because we had Marines coming in from different units. After the first two to three weeks something happened and everyone just clicked. The Marines did an outstanding job, especially given the timeline they had to work with,” the Phoenix native added.

Gordon said it was great to be able to have the squadron return before the holidays so the Marines could be with their families – something they earned through their hard work during the UDP.

“It’s a plus for the families and it’s good to be in the states where we can see our families,” Gordon said. “The success of this UDP heavily depended on the sergeants, staff sergeants and (gunnery sergeants) to teach the younger guys – without strong leadership in the enlisted ranks you won’t get much accomplished, and we had (gunnery sergeants) out there doing maintenance on the birds, showing young Marines how to do their jobs. They were professional and represented the United States and Marine Corps well.”

Beyond the Golden Gate

Story by Cpl. Ethan E. Rocke

MCRD San Diego Combat Correspondent

With countless lavish hotels competing to attract high society's most socially elite, the heart of downtown San Francisco may not seem like the most appealing place to stay on a servicemember's salary. But among the high-priced, high-end hotels and clubs, there lies a diamond among diamonds, sparkling with a special splendor that beckons to the visiting Marine with its crimson and gold magnificence while still carrying a cubic zirconia price tag.

The Marines' Memorial Club, located just two blocks from San Francisco's Union Square, is a 12-story, Beaux-Arts style building housing 137 guest rooms and suites.

The club was established in 1946 after then - Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Alexander A. Vandegrift directed the establishment of a memorial in San Francisco "... as a tribute to those Marines who have gone before and a service to those who carry on."

Instead of erecting a statue or static display, it was decided that a 'living memorial' would best honor Marines of the past, present and future. Since opening its doors Nov. 10, 1946, the club has fulfilled Vandegrift's vision by being that living memorial.

"The club is fantastic," said Jack McCloskey, a retired firefighter and former Marine. "It's the best place to stay in San Francisco. The service is impeccable. It's a first-rate hotel, and it's the only one like it in the world."

The club's founding members decided the living memorial concept would best be realized with the integration of three components - historical, business and emotional. This original vision continues to be the club's winning formula as its three functions consistently complement each other.

HISTORICAL

The original vision of the club called for the establishment and maintenance of a museum, which would serve as a tribute to all Marine heroes. During its 57 years of existence, the numerous displays and artifacts found throughout the club have done just that, creating an atmosphere that nurtures and carries on the Corps' proud history and traditions.

Every exhibit, plaque, artifact, work of art and classic piece of furniture in the club tells a story of the past, according to retired 1st Sgt. Scott de Carrillo, director of histori-

cal programs, Marines' Memorial Association.

The MMA is the umbrella organization that overseas the club and hotel.

"We place a lot of emphasis on military history," said de Carrillo. "It's very important to always remember where we came from. That's why we are preservers of the past and ushers of the future."

The club's library, located on the 11th floor, acts as a strong link to the past as well, housing several of the club's historical displays and countless military-related books. The library also features a semi-p a n - oramic view

of the city.

BUSINESS

The MMA is a non-profit veterans' organization, which thrives as a living memorial sustained by a number of revenue sources.

While hotel accommodations are the club's primary source of revenue, annual membership dues generate a significant percentage of the club's income, with close to 20,000 members across the United States.

"(Association) membership is such a vital part of sustaining the living memorial," said de Carrillo. "It helps us provide affordable rates and outstanding service for our guests."

All members of the U.S. military are eligible for membership in the MMA. Membership is not a requirement for active duty service members to stay at the club.

However, association membership does carry several fringe benefits. It is well worth

the cost, and nightly club rates for members and their guests are the most reasonable in San Francisco, according to de Carrillo.

"I encourage every Marine to seriously consider membership with the Marines' Memorial Club. It's a wonderful example of Marine Corps tradition and pride, and the benefits are endless," said Col. Thomas W. Spencer, chief of staff, Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego and the Western Recruiting Region, and MMA board member.

The Skyroom Restaurant and cocktail lounge, located on the club's 12th floor, is more than a source of revenue for the club. The Skyroom offers a graceful setting to dine in with a vibrant city view. While staying at the club, members can enjoy free cocktails from 4 to 6 p.m. and complimentary breakfast from 7 to 10:30 a.m.

The club also generates revenue from its two elegant ballrooms, which host several corporate conventions and symposiums annually and a variety of ceremonies including weddings, receptions, reunions and Marine Corps birthday balls.

To accommodate guests on business, the club also maintains a corporate business center equipped with two internet-accessible computers and a conference room.

Lastly, the club rents space and some of its facilities.

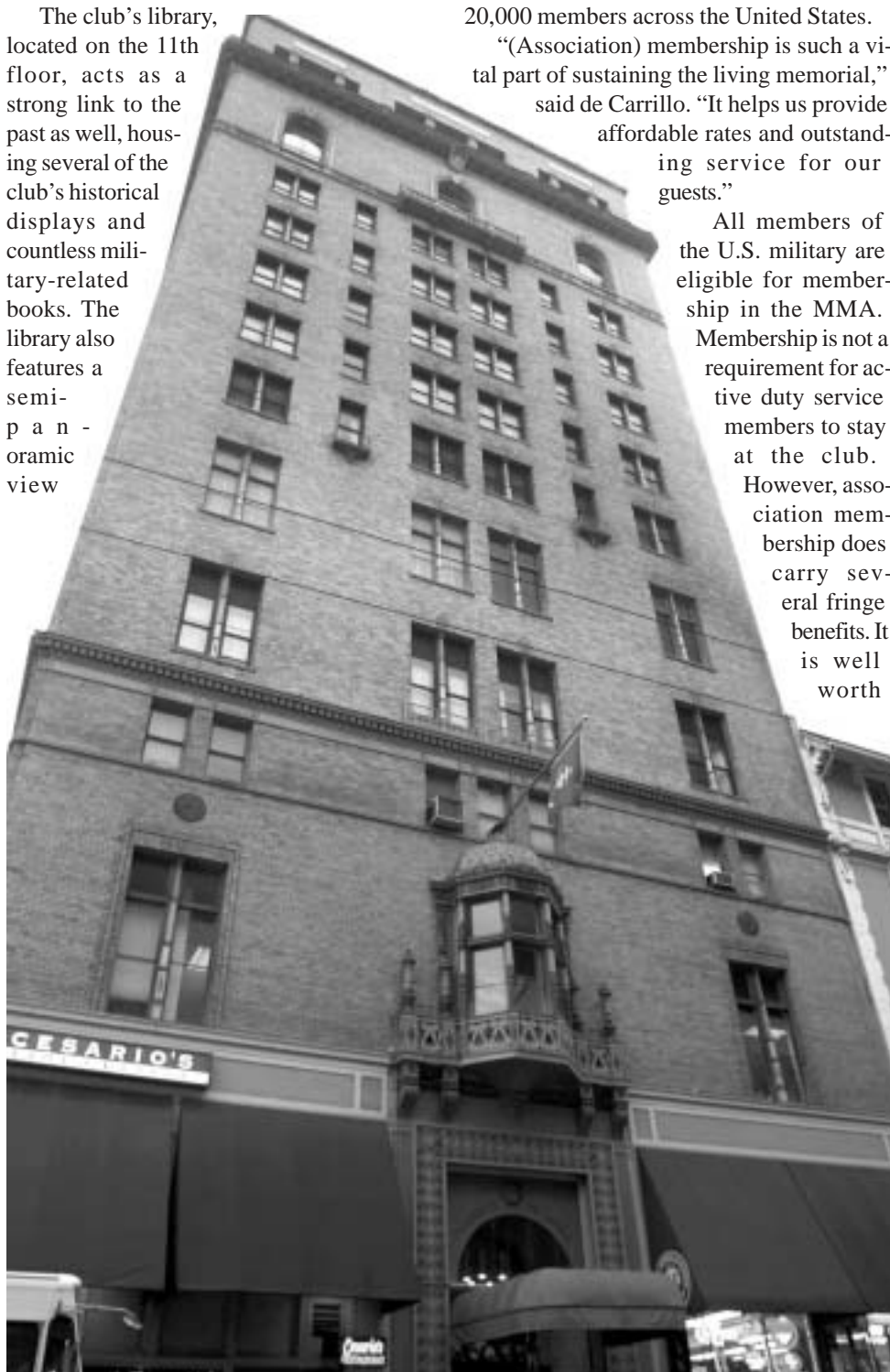
Club One, one of San Francisco's premiere fitness centers, occupies the basement portion of the memorial, and MMA members can take advantage of Club One's services.

The memorial's theater, located on the third floor, is also rented out and features a variety of plays and shows throughout the year. The theater has played host to such famous acts as Tony Curtis, Bing Crosby and Burt Lancaster.

The club also rents two spaces on the ground floor. To the left of the club's entrance is "Cesario's Restaurant." To the right is a convenience store and cigar shop.

EMOTIONAL

The MMC was established to honor the memory of past Marines while serving those who carry on the Corps' legacy. For its more than 57 years of existence, it has done that and more, providing much more than a place to sleep. The club is a place for Marines and their fellow servicemembers to revel in the camaraderie and pride they share in carrying on the legacy of the U.S. military. This was Vandegrift's vision, and the MMA perpetuates this goal today.



The Marines' Memorial Club has provided a pleasant, affordable place for Marines to stay since opening its doors Nov. 10, 1946. Photo illustration by Cpl. Ethan E. Rocke

Keys to the city

Cpl. Ethan E. Rocke

MCRD San Diego Combat Correspondent

When it was established in 1946, the Marines' Memorial Club could not have been more strategically placed for visiting servicemembers on a mission to explore the vast city of San Francisco.

Any hotel guests who are unfamiliar with the city can find the perfect starting point a few blocks away at the city's visitor information center. The center, which provides visitors with all kinds of helpful resources and information, is conveniently located next to the Bay Area Rapid

Transit station in Union Square.

All the keys to the city's numerous attractions and landmarks are within convenient close proximity to the club.

San Francisco's Union Square, home to one of the city's largest shopping districts, is less than two blocks away, and Chinatown is a short walk as well.

Fisherman's Wharf, Golden Gate Park and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art are just a few of the city's more popular attractions that can be reached by taxi or bus.

San Francisco has a seamlessly never-ending abundance of historical landmarks, cultural symbols and fascinating attractions.

Servicemembers interested in taking advantage of the Marines' Memorial Club and exploring the legendary city of San Francisco

can call the MMC reservations line at (800) 562-7463 or log on to www.marineclub.com.

What Marines will pay for a night at the club:

\$49 privates to sergeants
\$74 staff NCOs
\$84 lieutenants to captains
\$119 majors and up

Rates increase \$10 on Friday and Saturday nights. Guests receive complimentary breakfast and free happy-hour cocktails. Rates do not include the 14 percent city hotel tax.

2004 membership prices
\$35 enlisted
\$45 officer

Until 2004, enlisted Marines can take advantage of current membership prices,



A bird's-eye view of downtown San Francisco from the Marines' Memorial Club. Photo by Cpl. Ethan E. Rocke

which vary from \$20 to \$30. Membership supports the club and hotel.

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and in the custody of Coalition forces in an undisclosed location awaiting final determination of how he will be tried.

“The treatment of a person in his circumstance, it seems to me; it’s going to end up being discussed by the Coalition at high level, and lawyers will be involved,” said Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld in a Dec. 14 press conference. “I think it’s a bit early to begin making snap decisions about

what might be done.

“Here’s a man who has killed so many tens of thousands of people, who will have to be held accountable and brought to justice in some form, in some way,” added Rumsfeld.

When Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III announced in his press conference, “We got him,” service-members around the world exhaled a sigh of relief.

“It was an unbelievable feeling,” said Army Sgt. Billy Atkinson from the 124th Signal Battalion. “I

couldn’t believe it until I actually saw it on the news.”

The capture does not spell an end to U.S. operations in Iraq. Though Hussein has been captured, Mattis said the resistance may still attempt to rally a show of force.

In the meantime Miramar Marines continue to gear up for possible deployment, according to Sgt. Maj. William T. Kinney, I MEF sergeant major.

“His surrender is a perfect end to a regime full of cowards. Numerous times he called out for his

people to sacrifice their lives to resist U.S. and Coalition forces,” Kinney said. “But like most cowards, when it was his turn to pay the ultimate sacrifice he chose the easy way out. By no means is his capture the end. However, we are one small step closer to bringing lasting peace to that region of the world. For those insurgents and terrorists who still want to pay that ultimate sacrifice, the Marines and Sailors of I MEF will return this spring to ensure your requests are honored.”



Holiday season increases mailing awareness

Story by Cpl. Jeff Zaccaro

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

With the holiday season quickly approaching, the post office here needs servicemembers to take a few extra precautions when shipping and receiving mail.

According to Staff Sgt. William Elver, post office operations chief, one of the most important things to be aware of is proper packaging when mailing boxes.

“Some people are coming in here with shoe boxes and trying to mail them overseas, and it just won’t make it. They need to make sure they have a box that is suitable for mailing,” he said.

After a box sturdy enough for mailing is obtained, one

must also be weary of what goes into it.

“The major things we cannot ship are alcohol products, firearms or knives,” he said. “Before shipping a package, the sender also needs to check if there are any restrictions for the area they are sending it to. For instance, no religious material such as bibles or crucifixes can be sent to Kuwait.”

One officer and 19 enlisted Marines staff the post office, and it can receive up to 25 carts of mail each day. During the holiday season, customers may expect increased delays.

“Our customers need to check their boxes everyday up until Christmas Eve and be patient when receiving packages,” said Sgt. Andrew Finny, post office platoon

sergeant. “Because of the high volume of mail in the system during the holidays, a package that usually takes two to three days to receive may take up to two to three weeks.”

To speed up the mail process, senders need to also observe recommended mailing deadlines when sending letters or packages to FPO/APO addresses.

First Class Mail and Priority Mail being shipped to FPO/APO with a zip code starting with 093 should have been sent out by Dec. 4. Other parcels going to FPO/APO addresses should have been sent out by Dec. 11. Parcels shipped after these dates may not arrive before Christmas.

For more information on mailing deadlines and guidelines call the military post office at 577-1329.

Tuition Assistance changes help Marines get on track

Story by Cpl. Jeff Zaccaro

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

Marine Administrative Message 461/03 was released recently containing new requirements pertinent to the Tuition Assistance program.

The MARADMIN states that Marines must create a degree plan after earning 12 credits under the Tuition Assistance program to receive further financial assistance.

According to Chuck Banks, assistant education officer at the Education Office, a degree plan lists the credits a Marine has already received and shows what credits are still needed to fulfill the degree

requirements.

With the plan in effect Marines will no longer be able to take random classes that are not significant to their course of study.

“Marines will now have to make a decision and become focused on what course of study they want to pursue,” said Banks.

According to Banks, although the degree plan creates a narrow path for those utilizing the Tuition Assistance program, students who are undecided on their course of study can still apply for and receive tuition assistance.

“Marines can still use tuition assistance towards a general, or liberal arts degree,” he said. “If they are unsure of what they

want to study, they can start by taking Math or English courses, because every degree requires those two basic subjects. They can also come down here and we will help them decide what courses will be best for them.”

After creating a degree plan with their current college, Marines are not obligated to complete their degree at that particular college.

“If a Marine gets transferred, the degree plan will help us evaluate what classes (the Marine) still needs to take, so we can recommend colleges for their next duty station,” Banks said.

The degree plans will also prevent Marines from taking unneeded classes,

according to Banks.

“Some people have enough credits for three degrees, but cannot actually apply them to any one in particular,” he said. “This will make sure that they take the right classes to progress them towards their degree.”

Banks said in addition to creating a degree plan, all new Tuition Assistance users must attend a College 101 class to help them properly utilize the program.

To create a degree plan, contact your college admissions office, or for more information contact the Air Station’s Education Office at 577-1801.



Lt. Gen. Gregson visits Miramar

Lt. Gen. Wallace C. Gregson, speaks to Marines of 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing during the Wing’s noncommissioned officer’s parade. The NCO parade was held to recognize the 3rd MAW NCO and Marines of the Quarter and Year, and the Senior, Junior and Blue Jacket Sailors of the quarter. In order to instill the trust, confidence and authority that NCOs possess, the parade was lead by these Marines.

Gregson, who serves as the commander of Marine Forces Pacific, Fleet Marine Force Pacific and Marine Corps Bases Pacific, made two other stops while visiting the Air Station Dec. 12.

He first attended a luncheon with Maj. Gen. James F. Amos, 3rd MAW commanding general, and Brig. Gen. Terry G. Robling, 3rd MAW assistant wing commander.

After the luncheon, Gregson visited the hangar of Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 121, to present the Chief of Naval Operations Safety Award and the Commandant’s Trophy for the 2003 fiscal year. *Photo by Cpl. Jeff Zaccaro*

While safe workers may not always be good workers, you can be absolutely sure that a good worker is a safe worker.

MWHS-3 helps young families through ...

Angel Tree

Story by Cpl. Jeff Zaccaro

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron 3 Family Readiness Office gave out nearly 100 presents to the squadron's young families Monday from their Angel Tree.

According to Capt. Sharon Franco, MWHS-3 Family Readiness Officer from Anaheim, Ca., the Angel Tree was started three years ago by the squadron to help families of E-5s and below who may be having trouble buying gifts for their children during the holiday season.

"The families came in and filled out angels listing the age of their child and what kind of gifts they would like to

receive," Franco said. "The angels were then hung on a tree in the squadron's building, where they were available to be taken."

Once the angels were taken and signed out on a roster, Franco recorded the number on the card and ensured the gifts were delivered on time. Once the gifts were purchased, Franco separated them by family and then by child in her office until the day they were delivered.

According to Sgt. Maj. David Scharnhorst, MWHS-3 squadron sergeant major, the Angel Tree is a great way to help out the younger Marines in his squadron and show them the squadron cares about their welfare.

"This really makes the holidays a lot easier if a family is having financial difficulties," he said. "It also shows them that their superiors are here for them because the program is totally voluntary."

Out of more than 500 Marines and Sailors that make up the squadron, 34 angels found their way to the tree this year, each one representing a different child, and each one yielding different gifts.

"The gifts that were brought in had everything from toys to clothes and gift certificates in them," said Franco.

Although MWHS-3 is the first command Scharnhorst has been in that has had an Angel Tree, he believes it is a program more units should adopt.

"This is a great program. I have been to units before where Marines have been eligible for Toys for Tots, but I have never seen anything quite like this," he said. "My wife is a master sergeant, and she likes the idea so much that she wants to adopt the program into her unit."

There is no question the gifts mean a lot to the families who receive them, but for the donators it means just as much.

"This is what Christmas is all about, giving to others and ensuring that they have the opportunities to have a good holiday," said Rae Yingling, a Key Volunteer who serves as the unit family activity coordinator and Angel Tree donator.

MCCS pays CP&L for Christmas spirit

The 2003 Holiday Door Decorating Contest came to a conclusion Tuesday when the Community Plans and Liaison office of Marine Corps Air Bases Western Area Headquarters was awarded the 1st place prize, which came with a \$125 check.

Placing 2nd and receiving a \$100 check was the Adjutant Office of Marine Aircraft Group 46. Third place and a \$75 check went to the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing Adjutant Office.

According to Alisa Hertzler, Single Marine Program coordinator, there were 14 entries in the contest this year, the most since the contest began. Everyone who entered the contest was given free refreshments for their efforts.

Doors were judged Dec. 11 on theme, originality, creativity and overall presentation. *Photo by Cpl. James S. McGregor*



Forget the egg nog, eat a hot dog!

Marines of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron line up for food during the H&HS Christmas party at Mills Park here Wednesday. *Photo by Lance Cpl. John Sayas*

December favored for more reasons than one

Story by Lt. Cmdr. Nestor Nazario

MCB Hawaii Chaplain

For many people, December is their favorite month. The lyrics of a popular song describe the season as “the most wonderful time of the year.”

The holiday melodies that fill the air, the colorful lights that decorate our surroundings, the gathering of family and friends with the exchange of gifts and favorite recipes, all create a special festive ambiance of joy, love and hope that we treasure and desire year after year.

But why December? What makes this month so special? The answer to this question may be found in nature itself.

Between the 20th and 23rd of December, those who live in the northern hemisphere experience the shortest day and the longest night of the year. This event is known as the winter “solstice” - derived from two Latin words: “sol” meaning sun and “sistere,” which means to cause to stand still.

This year’s winter solstice will occur on Dec. 21 at 11:04 p.m. (PST). From this date and time until the summer solstice (June 21), the nights will grow shorter and the days longer.

In prehistoric times, winter was a very difficult time for Aboriginal people living in the northern latitudes. They had to live off stored food and whatever animals they could catch. People became troubled as they observed the sun sinking lower each noon, fearing that it would eventually disappear and leave them in total darkness and frigid weather.

After the winter solstice, they would have reason to celebrate as they saw the sun rising and strengthening once more. They knew the return of the warm season was inevitable and better days lay ahead.

Since then, the winter solstice has been observed and celebrated throughout history and in many cultures as the birth of the sun, of light and of life itself.

The ancient Persians set bonfires and sent birds overhead carrying torches of

dried grass to stimulate the sun. The Romans celebrated the birth of sol invictus, the unconquered sun, on Dec. 25. Most Christians found it appropriate to celebrate the birth of Jesus on this date, since he is seen by many as the light of this world.

Countless religious and non-religious celebrations have been directly or indirectly linked with the observance of the winter solstice and have contributed, in no small measure, into making December the most wonderful time of the year.

There is a lesson to be learned from this

event of nature. No matter how dark, cold, bleak or discouraging we may find our predicament to be, we should take heart and actively hope for a better future.

As the sun appears to stop moving to the southern hemisphere before heading back north, we should stop and reassess where we are, where we want to be, and then make the necessary adjustments.

Our future can be brighter if we believe and actively hope for it. As Dr. Robert H. Schuller once said, “Tough times never last, but tough people do.”

Weatherize buildings

Install awnings, solar shade screens or sun-control film for windows and apply a heat-blocking coating to your roof. Some incentives and rebates may be available to help defray initial costs.

Marines stand-down for safety

Story by Cpl. James S. McGregor

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

A safety stand-down held Dec. 11 at the Station Theater gave many Marines here plenty of reasons to think more seriously about their efforts to remain safe during the busy holiday season.

Various speakers – Lt. Col. Robert M. Zeisler, director, Safety Division, Marine Corps Air Bases Western Area; Col. Paul C. Christian, chief of staff, MCABWA; Navy Cmdr. Irving A. Elson, chaplain, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron; driving safety presenter Jerry Witrand; traffic comedian Steve Verret; and Lt. Col. Dean T. Siniff, commanding officer, H&HS – urged Marines to be safe over the holidays and throughout the year.

Subjects covered during the brief included suicide prevention, death investigations, driving statistics, drug and alcohol abuse, and most of all, traffic safety. Marines were warned of what happens to people who break the rules or simply act reckless. They saw photos of victims who made careless decisions such as speeding, drunk driving or not wearing their seatbelt. Marines were also given options and advice on how to remain safe in a busy part of the world during a busy time of year.

Although every speaker offered quality statistics, warnings and advice, it seemed most Marines considered the comedy act to be the climax and attention grabber of the brief – a refreshing addition to a typically important, yet dry, presentation. For Zeisler, Cajun comedian Steve Verret was a pinch of spice for the stand-down.

“We have used the comedian in the past,” Zeisler explained. “The idea is to package safety in a way that makes it more interesting for the audience to get the message vice just a boring lecture. Same with the coroner - you can talk about not drinking and driving and wearing seat belts until you are blue in the face, but seeing the result of careless behavior is another way to get the point across.”

Ho, Ho, Health? *Staying healthy through the holiday season*

Story by Sgt. W.A. Napper Jr.

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

December finds us smack in the middle of the holiday season.

With Thanksgiving safely behind us, now we are staring straight ahead to Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa or Winter Solstice depending on your beliefs, with New Year's right after that. This time of year is normally joyous for most of us, as well as the most challenging for those in the military.

With the Marine Corps' mandatory height and weight standards, this time of year can be almost deadly to some Marines' and Sailors' careers. While some Marines may not necessarily be close to being overweight, many Marines cannot afford to gain the same weight the average American does throughout the holiday season – close to 10 pounds. However, with a little discipline – something servicemembers know a bit about – and some tactically sound eating, the holidays can be both enjoyable and healthy.

According to the American Heart Association, with ginger cookies, cakes, turkeys, hams, stuffing and every-

thing else that goes into yuletide fun, this isn't the time to try and lose weight, simply to maintain it.

With simple tips from the AHA, this holiday season can be enjoyable without the guilt of having to watch your weight.

Use the holidays to create quality family time. Turn off the television and go bike riding or sledding with the kids.

Don't starve the day of the party so you can fill up on food that evening. If you eat normally throughout the day, you're much less likely to overeat at the party.

Survey the entire buffet before you fill your plate. This will help you select only the foods that you want.

Present food in various locations to encourage activities and mingling as well as eating.

Walking, jogging, snow-skiing, ice-skating, aerobic dancing or any other physical activity can help your heart this holiday season. Even if it's cold outside, you can still squeeze in fitness. After all, any exercise moves you toward a healthier heart.

From holiday shopping, to party planning, to getting out those greeting cards on time, you can still find a convenient time and place to fit in physical activity. Try to make it a habit, but be flexible. If you miss an exercise

opportunity, work it into your day another way.

Use music as entertainment while you work out. There's nothing like some upbeat holiday tunes to help keep the body moving!

'Tis the season for spending time with family. Share your workouts with a family member, friend or co-worker. Get out and power walk together.

Keep a record of your activities. Reward yourself at special milestones. Nothing motivates you like joining a group to go caroling or calling a long-lost friend.

Baste meats and poultry with fat-free ingredients, such as wine, fruit juice or fat-free beef or chicken broth.

Substitute chopped vegetables for some of the bread when you make stuffing.

Add a few drops of lemon juice to the water you cook pasta in, and eliminate the salt and oil.

Cut down on saturated fat in creamy dressings by mixing in some nonfat or low-fat plain yogurt.

With these tips and a little discipline, the holidays can be enjoyable for you as well as those around you, and you won't need to make any unnecessary New Year's resolutions.

ASIST trains personnel as first responders to suicide

Story by Lance Cpl. John Sayas

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

Each year thousands of suicides take place throughout the United States. The exact number of attempts or threats of suicide or even the number of people who think about it is unknown. In the past ten years, suicide has been the second leading cause of death to Marines.

The Marine Corps has adopted a program called Applied Suicide Intervention Systems Training as part of its suicide prevention program to give commands a better chance to respond to suicide threats

and reduce the number of suicides.

"Every leader in the Marine Corps wants to eliminate and reduce suicide attempts," said Cmdr. Howard F. Holley, deputy Wing chaplain, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing. "Giving people the opportunity to receive this training shows that the commanders are taking a very specific interest in taking care of their people."

The purpose of the two-day training program, which was provided to military personnel here recently, is to train people at various levels of command, enlisted and officers, as first responders. First responders are equipped to identify and have the

knowledge of suicide tendencies and things that cause people to consider suicide, according to Holley.

"(First responders) are trained to be able to identify people who might be exhibiting (suicidal tendencies) in the command and direct them to health care providers, such as to mental health, chaplains or counselors," Holley said. "The training equips commands with more eyes and ears."

He said that most suicides do not necessarily occur during the holiday season, but instead during the spring and summer months, making it more important

for first responders to be able recognize the different signs of distress among personnel. Suicidal thoughts can be brought on by an event or series of events best characterized by a loss or threatened loss, such as a relationship break up, a professional or personal failure, or humiliation.

"The whole purpose of this is to prevent suicide and to save the lives of Marines and Sailors," Holley said. "If people who have thoughts (of) suicide get the appropriate help they need, most of them, over time, can return and be very productive citizens."





R. Lee Ermey stands with Sgt. Maj. Michael A. Spruel, Marine Corps Air Bases Western Area sergeant major, during the Toys for Tots Golf Tournament here Dec. 10. Ermey starred in the movie "Full Metal Jacket" and is the host of the History Channel show "Mail Call." Photo by LCpl. John Sayas

Story by Lance Cpl. John Sayas

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

Needy children in the San Diego area will have a new toy for Christmas as a result of donations given during the annual Toys for Tots Golf Tournament at the Miramar Memorial Golf Course Dec. 10.

Even with a little drizzle and

cool temperatures, 142 golfers came out to play in the annual event hosted by the Flying Leatherneck Historical Foundation. Each player who registered for the tournament donated a new unwrapped toy to the program, including special guest player, R. Lee Ermey, star of the movie "Full Metal Jacket" and host of the History Channel's "Mail Call."

Ermey, who attended recruit

training and was a drill instructor at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, has volunteered his services for the Toys for Tots program in San Diego for over 20 years.

"I've always considered San Diego as my home," Ermey said. "The people in the San Diego area are warm loving people. It's a breath of fresh air for me to come down here every year."

Ermey arrived Dec. 9 to spend

The movie star helps raise gifts for T4T

the next ten days visiting servicemembers at Naval Medical Center San Diego, Camp Pendleton and MCRD San Diego, while helping promote the Toys for Tots program in the community, according to Chief Warrant Officer Wendy Willis, Public Affairs Events Coordinator, San Diego Toys for Tots Program. She said the association Ermey has with the Marine Corps ties in well for the program because the same audience that watches his show appreciates what he does.

"He is donating his time, which is valuable," said Willis, a San Diego native. "I think it's very generous of him."

Ermey does not consider himself a great golfer, but said he can still have fun knowing he participated in an event that will help thousands of needy children during the holiday season.

"We are not here to win a golf game. We are out here to play a game of golf and have a good time and maybe drum up some toys for Toys for Tots," he said. "We accomplished that today, so we win."

The Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program collects new, unwrapped toys October through December each year and

distributes them as gifts to thousands of needy children in communities across the country. Willis said the program collects more than 100,000 toys every year in the San Diego area alone.

"As the toys come in, they get sorted and packaged then shipped right back out," she said. "We give out, on average, two toys per child. It's one of the things as a community you can use to build hope in children which makes them feel better about life."

Toys for Tots activities include collection and distribution of toys in the communities in which a Marine Corps Reserve unit is located or in the communities without a reserve unit that have a Marine Corps League Detachment or groups of men and women, generally veteran Marines, authorized by Marine Toys for Tots Foundation to conduct a local Toys for Tots campaign.

Local campaign coordinators conduct an array of activities throughout the year, which include golf tournaments, footraces, bicycle races and other voluntary events designed to increase interest in the program, which generates toy and monetary donations.

Chapel weekly schedule of events

Holy Family Catholic Community

- ♦ Christmas Eve, 6 p.m., Christmas Day, 11 a.m. holiday mass.
- ♦ Rosary: 10:30 a.m. Sunday.
- ♦ Confession: 10:15 a.m. Sunday or for appointments call Father Berchmanz at 577-1333.
- ♦ Religious classes for children for first communion, confirmation: 9:30-10:45 a.m. Sunday.
- ♦ Youth gathering and planning following mass Sunday.
- ♦ Baptism: Normally the first Sunday of the month. Call chaplain's office for details.
- ♦ Marriage: Call chaplain for details at least six months before wedding.
- ♦ Instruction in the Catholic faith (RCIA). Call chaplain's office for details.
- ♦ Scripture Class: 7 p.m. Wednesday in Chapel classroom.
- ♦ Choir Practice: 6 p.m. Wednesday in Main Chapel.

Liturgical Christian

- ♦ Sunday: Choir rehearsal at 9 a.m.
Liturgical worship at 9:30 a.m. Christmas Eve 8 p.m. holiday mass.
Adult/Youth/Children Bible study at 10:45 a.m.
- ♦ Tuesday: Morning prayer group (Room 4) at 6 a.m.
Contemporary Gospel Service at 7:30 p.m.
- ♦ Wednesday: Crafts and conversation at 9 a.m. Free childcare provided.
Women's bible study at 10:45 a.m.
Baptist service at 7 p.m.
- ♦ Thursday: Liturgical choir rehearsal at 7:30 p.m.
- ♦ Friday: Baptist bible study at 7 p.m.

Jewish

- ♦ First Friday of the month at MCRD San Diego at 7 p.m.
- ♦ Last Friday of the month in Edson Range Chapel Camp Pendleton at 7:30 p.m.

Iwo Jima we remember

A memorial service and banquet commemorating the 59th anniversary of the Marines landing on Iwo Jima, will be held at the South Mesa Staff NCO Club, Camp Pendleton, at 4 p.m., Feb. 21, 2004.

This will be preceded by planned activities Feb. 19 and 20, 2004.

The men, wives and friends of the 3rd, 4th and 5th Marine Divisions and supporting units involved in the landing, and the general public are invited to participate.

For more information, please contact:
Iwo Jima Committee
308 Aqueduct Court
Placenta, CA 92870-5469

New Vehicle Registration location

As of Jan. 5, 2004, Vehicle Registration, Accident Investigation and Traffic Court Clerk will no longer be located by the East Gate.

They will be located on Station at Bauer Rd., across from the Station Theater in build-

Free movies from MCCS

| Friday | Sunday |
|---|--|
| Good Boy The Texas Chainsaw Massacre Kill Bill Vol. 1 | (PG) 4:30 p.m. Elf (R) 6:30 p.m. Special Screening (R) 8:30 p.m. (call theater for title) Intolerable Cruelty |
| Saturday | Wednesday |
| Brother Bear Good Boy Runaway Jury | (G) 1:00 p.m. (PG) 6:30 p.m. No movies scheduled (PG-13) 8:30 p.m. |

The Station Theater is equipped with a 35 mm projection system and Dolby digital surround sound. All movies are free for DoD ID card holders and their guests. For movie synopsis see the current theater flyer or call 577-4143.

ing 6274. Their telephone numbers will remain the same.

Home for the holidays

Be a part of MCAS Miramar's Home for the Holidays. Local families have been calling for weeks and they want to welcome you to their homes and feed you for Christmas.

There are five simple steps to get matched up with a family for Christmas:

1. Get a Home for the Holidays application at the front desk of the Great Escape or go online at www.mccsmiramar.com, go to the Great Escape page and download the form.
2. Complete the application.
3. Drop it off or fax it to the Great Escape at 577-4775, or mail it by Saturday: MCCS Department the Great Escape

MCAS Miramar
PO Box 452008
San Diego, CA 92145-2008

4. Receive a call. One of the Great Escape staff members will call you the week of Dec. 23 to let you know the name of the family that will be picking you up for the holiday.

5. Meet the host family at the Great Escape and have a great holiday.

For more information regarding the Home for the Holidays program contact the Great Escape at 577-6171.

**A fatal accident
happens only
once in a lifetime.**

Letter, continued from page 2

II MEF to assist us in the Central Command theater. Secondly, he authorized the use of reserve forces to help fill requirements across the spectrum. Our Marine reservists are tremendous. The only unhappy units in our reserve forces are those who have not yet been called to active duty to take the fight to the terrorists. Third, to help spread the load, the commandant has coordinated the use of Unit Deployment Program (UDP) battalions already on Okinawa for further deployment to Iraq. Finally, CMC has established “redlines” to govern the deployment of all Marines. Redlines state that Marines will be at home station for at least as long as they were gone on the previous deployment; and reserves previously called to active duty and now released will not be remobilized.

Within the MEF, we have expanded our base of deployable units by creating provisional infantry battalions made up primarily of Marines from the artillery regiments. As we won’t need a lot of artillery fires where we will be going, we are able to take advantage of the concept of “every Marine a rifleman first.” We have cut back on, or eliminated, exercises and training that are not seen as directly contributing to mission accom-

plishment in Iraq. We have discussed our lessons learned with the bases and stations where MEF Marines are assigned and base commanders are optimistic support to families will be even better than before.

Lastly, in a distinct departure from the norm, I have authorized the Division, Wing, and Force Service Support Group commanders to publish a schedule for all Marines that will show deployment windows for battalion and squadron size units for the next three years. That information is normally closely guarded, but these are not normal times, and we want to return a level of predictability to your lives. Our guidance from CMC is to answer the nation’s call – but not to “break the force.” That means we do not want to allow deployments and family separation to become so onerous that great young Marines and their families decide they have no choice but to leave. We will need to know from you when “enough” becomes “too much”.

In closing, we should draw satisfaction that current methods of combating terrorists appear to be working – at least in the US. There have been no attacks in our country since 9/11. We believe the terrorists are going to Iraq to take on Americans are the same miserable misfits who would otherwise attempt to come here – to attack innocent women and children in Boston or Los An-

geles.

Your Marines would much rather maintain the initiative and deal with enemies on their own soil, than worry about the vulnerability of their loved ones at home if those people are left unchecked. No family relishes separation, but I trust every family understands the importance of what our Marines and Sailors are doing – and can feel immense pride in the way they do it. The day will come when the operational tempo will return to a level of normalcy. In the meantime, have confidence that the MEF – indeed your Marine Corps – is aware of, and appreciates, the sacrifices you are making in these most difficult times.

I wish you all the joy and happiness the holidays can offer. Enjoy your time off and be safe. Come back from leave and liberty healthy, focused and ready for whatever the New Year may bring. May God continue to bless you, our Corps, and this great nation.

Safety, continued from page 7

Zeisler added a few reasons of the stand-down’s importance – one being the importance of individual Marines to mission accomplishment.

“We want to get together and take our

minds off our jobs and see what’s going on with safety,” Zeisler said. “The purpose of this stand-down was to let the Marines, Sailors and civilians of MCAS Miramar know they are a valued member of our team and we need them to do the nation’s business. It was also designed to prepare a mindset prior to the holidays to look at risks, apply operational risk management and make decisions that will bring them back from the holidays safely.”

MCCS Teen City offers FREE ...

Gift Wrapping

**Monday through
Wednesday
Noon until 6 p.m.**

*For more information call 577-6701
or visit the Youth and Teen Center at
building 2246*